



# Mount Rainier National Park

## Paradise Construction Update

No. 1 – February 2006



**M**ount Rainier National Park is planning two simultaneous construction projects at Paradise beginning this spring and continuing through the summer of 2008. The two projects and associated work include rehabilitation of the historic Paradise Inn, construction of a new visitor center, demolition of the current visitor center, and redesign of the parking lots.

## Visiting Paradise This Summer

**Paradise wildflower meadows, trails, and the Paradise Jackson Visitor Center remain open** to visitors during construction of the new visitor center and rehabilitation of the Paradise Inn.

All traditional services and activities are available at Paradise with the exception of lodging during the temporary closure of Paradise Inn and construction of the new visitor center. All normal activities and guest services remain available in all other areas of the park. A variety of overnight accommodations, restaurants, and guest services are also available at the National Park Inn at Longmire and in nearby communities.

Expect significantly reduced levels of parking during construction. A shuttle system will be provided free of charge along with alternative parking within the greater Paradise area.

To avoid parking congestion consider visiting Paradise during early morning, evening, and weekdays or schedule excursions to other areas of the park, take an alternate route, and experience the sights and activities of gateway communities during peak hours and weekends.





## Why Build a New Visitor Center?

**Basic problems with the existing Jackson Visitor Center's design** make it inefficient and difficult to maintain, incompatible with the rustic character of Paradise, and inconsistent with modern building codes. For these reasons, a new visitor center will be built to take its place. The roof was not built to withstand the fifteen to twenty feet of snow that bury everything in a typical winter. Consequently, an elaborate snow-melt system had to be installed in the roof to keep it clear. During the winter months it takes between 300 and 500 gallons of diesel fuel *per day* to heat the building and melt the snow off the roof. Repair of the snow-melt system, embedded in the roof, would require replacement of the roof which would be cost prohibitive. The snowmelt system risks the safety of park staff when they are required to manually remove snow from the roof. If the roof heating system failed, the existing visitor center could collapse under the snow load.

Paradise is part of a designated National Historic Landmark District, with historic architecture that fits the natural setting. The modernistic design of the Jackson Visitor Center is incompatible with other, more traditional, structures around it. It also no longer meets current building codes or accessibility guidelines. Its ramps are too steep, and there is no elevator.

Although the new visitor center will be smaller, it will serve visitors better. It will be a model of energy efficiency and new exhibits will interpret the natural features and cultural significance of Mount Rainier. A classic design and careful landscaping will blend the building into the natural and historic landscape, while plenty of windows will permit panoramic views of Mount Rainier and the Tatoosh Range.

## Protecting Paradise

**Help limit impacts and protect vegetation** by parking only in designated parking spots, walking and hiking on roads and trails, and waiting for shuttles in designated locations.



## Construction Zone!

**Ensure a safe visit** by following traffic and pedestrian signs, using patience while driving in the heavily congested area, watching for children and pedestrians, and staying out of construction zones.

## Rehabilitation of the Paradise Inn



**The Paradise Inn** is the largest lodging facility located within Mount Rainier National Park. The Inn was built using massive timbers and glacial boulders to blend the building with its natural surroundings and, therefore, the building is a contributing feature to the park's National Historic Landmark District designation.

The Paradise Inn was constructed in 1916 and is at increasing risk of structural failure due to the damage caused by heavy exterior snow loading. The Inn fails to meet current best professional structural standards and codes and, therefore, poses a potential risk to human health and safety in the event of a major earthquake. A structural viability assessment of the Inn in 1996 estimated that a catastrophic failure of the entire structure was possible within the next ten years. In addition, the Inn is not accessible for individuals with mobility impairments, nor does it contain guest rooms that are compliant with the Americans with Disability Act. The grand hearths and their chimneys are also at risk of collapse in the Main Lobby and Dining Hall.

The rehabilitation will correct these deficiencies, resulting in a structure that is safe, stable, and serves visitors better. The Paradise Inn will reopen to guests in May 2008.

## When Will the Work Occur?

This is a proposed timetable and is subject to change:

### **Construction of New Visitor Center:**

Start April 2006 and open October 2008

### **Rehabilitate Paradise Inn and Annex:**

Start April 2006 and complete April 2008

### **Remove the Jackson Visitor Center:**

Start October 2008 and complete January 2009

### **Lower Parking Area Site Rehabilitation:**

Start May 2009 and complete August 2009